

County Councillor report

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Parishes: Blewbury, Chilton, Harwell, Upton, Western Valley

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Dear Parish Councillors and residents,

The last few weeks have been extremely busy, largely with road resurfacing issues. Many residents will have been negatively affected by the closure of both Didcot Road exits from GWP, and by overnight closures of part of Didcot Road. The communication, and to some extent, the planning around these roadworks was extremely poor, and several local councillors spent time following up with officers. I was able to speak directly to the Head of Highways and persuade him to switch off an ANPR camera to allow access for residents during closure, and I attended the site every night of the works with OCC officers to ensure that the works ran to schedule. On the positive side, the works were finished three days early, with some additional quality measures and pavement maintenance. I have already arranged a follow-up meeting with senior officers to review the processes that failed us on this occasion, and to make sure things improve going forwards.

Thank you to everyone who came to join our pubs of the parishes walk; in particular, John and Annabel from the Red Lion Blewbury, who between them joined the entire walk, and to the Station Garden, who put on free tea and coffee to set us up for the day.

I'm keen to continue a programme of public engagement, so will be doing more walks in the future – perhaps with particular focuses on issues raised with me directly – SEND, Adult Social Care etc. If you have any ideas for subjects you think it would be valuable to discuss with residents, please let me know.

Lastly, I am now on holiday until 13th November, so please bear with me if there is a delayed response to any issues you raise before then.

Best wishes
Bekah

Transport update

I'm very sorry to say that our transport network platform has recently been changed, and there are ongoing technical problems that prevent me from accessing local plans. I've asked for this to be fixed asap. I haven't received any formal notification of major works or road closures.

Please continue to report any highway defects on www.fixmystreet.com.

Other news and information

Congestion Charge Permits – The Oxford temporary congestion charge for cars is now in effect. If you have yet to apply for your 25 permits, you can still do so.

You can apply here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/transport-and-travel/oxfords-temporary-congestion-charge-cars/apply-permit>

South East Strategic Reservoir Option (SESRO) statutory consultation – Thames Water has now launched its statutory consultation on the SESRO scheme. It will close on 13 January 2026 and you can find out more here: <https://thames-sro.co.uk/public-consultations/south-east-strategic-reservoir-option-sesro-statutory-consultation-2025/> There will also be an information event at Didcot Civic Hall on 10th November from 2-8pm – do drop in if you can.

Shaping the future of our fire and rescue service - Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue has recently completed a review of how it delivers its emergency response and community safety across the county. We are now inviting residents to offer their views on a set of proposals for improving safety, efficient and resilience of the service. You can do so here: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/ofrs-consultation>

Name that gritter! – Oxfordshire has 30 new gritters for salting roads across the county over the winter season. Members of the public can submit name ideas until 5th November here: <https://letstalk.oxfordshire.gov.uk/name-oxfordshire-s-new-gritters/surveys/survey>

One Oxfordshire proposal – The County Council's proposal for a single unitary council will be going to Scrutiny and Cabinet in November, and if agreed, submitted to government on 28th November. You can read it here: <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/file/plans-performance-policy/OneOxfordshireProposal.pdf>

Councillor Priority Fund – All County Councillors have access to a pot of funding to support local community projects. Applications are open from now until November 2026. All parish councils and community groups or charities are welcome to submit applications – the minimum grant is £500, and there are rules regarding eligibility of applicants and projects. You can read more at <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/residents/communities/councillor-priority-fund>

New Highways Maintenance Initiative – The council is introducing a new Highways Asset Response Team (HART), to deliver faster and more efficient reactive highways maintenance. They will be undertaking a range of activities:

- Street furniture cleaning (e.g.: signs, bollards and other safety maintenance)
- Pedestrian safety enhancements (such as removing damaged equipment/footway plates and repairing surface deterioration)
- Vegetation management (clearing footways and cycleways)
- Surface debris clearance (street and pavement sweeping)
- Visual amenity improvements (removing old flyposting to keep streets smart and tidy)
- Street clutter reduction (making sure old traffic management signs and barriers are removed promptly)

I'll be meeting with the team before the end of the year to discuss our local areas; what and where we'd like them to focus their efforts. If you have any suggestions, please let me know.

Councillor queries

Recent queries I've raised on behalf of residents and Parish Councils include:

Ticket description	Status	Outcome/latest information
Traffic calming Harwell village	ONGOING	Works have now been confirmed – will miss the deadline of 19 th December and may take up to 8 weeks, most likely in New Year. The Parish Council already has details of the works.
GWP adoption	ONGOING	Spine roads adoption currently stuck in negotiations between Leap Utilities, SODC and Taylor Wimpey. We can't adopt any estate roads until the spine roads are adopted. I have a briefing scheduled on what the obstacles are to adoption.
Blewbury road safety	IN PROGRESS	Funding confirmed for wig wags, dropped kerbs and bollards at multiple points on London Road and Bessels Way. Hoping this will be a Christmas present for Blewbury! Still pushing for funding for a crossing at Savages – this should be possible if residents can agree to dark skies compliant street lighting either side of the crossing.
Harwell roadworks	IN PROGRESS	Investigation into the Grove Road works is ongoing
Harwell roadworks - repairs	COMPLETE	Further to the above, contractor vehicles damaged a manhole cover outside the High Street shops – this has been reported for repair and will also be followed up with the contractor. Virgin Media have now attended to put in temporary fix, due to return on 23 rd October
Road safety issues on A417	IN PROGRESS	Crossing confirmed at the Winnaway, with other speeding measures to be included as part of the works.
Coffin Way cycle path	AWAITING RESPONSE	Requested briefing on previous work re: footpath/potential cycle route between Blewbury and Upton – relevant officer on leave
D2A complaint	COMPLETE	Escalated resident complaint about Discharge to assess service from Didcot Community Hospital – followed up directly with Head of Hospitals. Now resolved with resident receiving regular physio and support visits from VOWH team.
Chilton Main St traffic calming	HANDED OVER	PC would need to fund (approx. £6k for unit, £500 per pole) – will wait to hear decision
Newbury Road speed	AWAITING RESPONSE	Have asked about possibility of reducing the adopted section of Newbury Road to 20mph due to number of houses facing straight onto road and considerable traffic
Chilton Fields adoption	COMPLETE	Chilton Fields – will there be further delays due to lighting upgrades – no upgrade due before adoption takes place, but Street Lighting team could upgrade in future if necessary and with resident support
Harwell - flooding	IN PROGRESS	Visit agreed: to be scheduled with flooding team
Harwell – pavement repairs and maintenance	IN PROGRESS	Visit agreed: to be scheduled with HART
SID data	ONGOING	SID data submitted to Police and Crime Panel; will be followed up at a future meeting.